United Nations A/62/89–E/2007/76

General Assembly
Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
11 June 2007

Original: English

General Assembly
Sixty-second session
Item 50 of the preliminary list*
Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Economic and Social Council
Substantive session of 2007
Geneva, 2-27 July 2007
Items 4, 6, 7 (f), 8, 13 and 14 of the provisional agenda**

The role of the United Nations system in promoting full and productive employment and decent work for all

Implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits

Coordination, programme and other questions: Information and Communication Technologies Task Force

Implementation of General Assembly resolutions 50/227, 52/12 B, 57/270 B and 60/265

Economic and environmental questions

Social and human rights questions

Role of the Economic and Social Council in the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of and follow-up to the major United Nations conferences and summits, in the light of General Assembly resolutions 50/227, 52/12 B, 57/270 B and 60/265

Report of the Secretary-General

* A/62/50.
** E/2007/100 and Corr.1.

07-37646 (E) 280607

Summary

The present report provides an overview of the major areas of progress and continuing challenges in the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits at the global, regional and country level and proposes steps that could be taken to address them. It highlights, in particular, the opportunities that the new functions of the Economic and Social Council, notably the annual ministerial review, the biennial Development Cooperation Forum and the specific event of the General Assembly on development, provide for advancing the integrated and coordinated follow-up of conferences.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is prepared in response to Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/44, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the role of the Economic and Social Council in the implementation of General Assembly resolutions 50/227, 52/12 B, 57/270 B and 60/265, and to paragraph 39 of General Assembly resolution 57/270 B, in which the Assembly requested the inclusion of an item entitled "Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields" in its agenda. The report serves as documentation for both the Council and the Assembly under the relevant agenda items.

2. Over the past 15 years, the major United Nations conferences and summits have together resulted in the emergence of a comprehensive shared vision of development. They have generated global consensus and shaped the policy orientation of Member States and of the United Nations system in a wide range of development areas, encompassing poverty eradication, sustainable development, financing for development, employment and decent work, social inclusion, food security, health, education, human rights, women and gender equality, children, population and human settlements.

3. By laying foundations for the Millennium Development Goals, as a distillation of some key elements of the outcomes of the conferences of the 1990s, the Millennium Summit provided a compelling platform to address the needs of the world's poor. At the 2005 World Summit, Heads of State and Government embraced the broader concept of the internationally agreed development goals, which fully reaffirmed the Millennium Development Goals but was intended, at the same time, to give new impetus to the broader set of commitments agreed at the major United Nations conferences and summits. Implied in this broader concept is the recognition that the Millennium Development Goals do not encompass all of the issues and goals that lead to durable economic and social progress and sustainable development, and that the drive for the Millennium Development Goals itself will gain force and be sustained if approached in the broader context of the implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits.

4. Those conferences of the 1990s, and the conferences that followed them in Johannesburg and Monterrey, have in turn served to enrich and to give new impetus and urgency to the call for the integrated follow-up to conferences, first voiced by the Economic and Social Council over 10 years ago. Through this call, reiterated and amplified over the years, the Council has sought to foster a comprehensive United Nations development agenda — a holistic approach to economic and social development that takes into account interrelationships and is aimed at advancing synergies among the different goals of the major United Nations conferences and summits, including the Millennium Development Goals. At the institutional level, the call is for enhanced system-wide coherence that serves to make the diversity and complexity of the United Nations system a source of strength so that United Nations organizations, both normative and operational, acting alone or in concert, can apply their varied strength to the common purpose of bringing the shared vision of the United Nations development agenda to fruition.

II. Overview of progress of the United Nations system in the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits

A. Global review

5. Each of the global conferences has focused on a specific aspect of development, relevant to the achievement of the United Nations development agenda. Each conference has generated its own follow-up mechanism with its own constituency, driving implementation forward, and each conference follow-up mechanism is contributing to the overall United Nations development agenda. At the same time, there are many issues that are closely interrelated and touch upon several goals of the United Nations conferences and summits. Given the strong linkages among them, those cross-cutting issues need to be pursued through multifaceted policies and actions with the recognition that outcomes in one sector are dependent on outcomes in others. Against this background, the Economic and Social Council has promoted an integrated and coordinated follow-up aimed at enhancing coherence among the various conference follow-up processes while at the same time allowing them to maintain their distinct identities.

6. The individual conference follow-up mechanisms and processes undertaken by various functional commissions continue to contribute to different elements of the United Nations development agenda. By focusing on the follow-up of their respective conferences, together they contribute to the whole spectrum of the agenda, covering economic, social and environmental aspects. Among the highlights of the conference follow-up processes are those described below.

7. In the area of economic development, functional commissions stressed that making employment a central objective of national and international policies and adopting a comprehensive approach, at both the national and the international levels, was imperative for reaching the internationally agreed development goals, particularly the goal of reducing poverty. It was also stressed that the social orientation of employment and poverty-reduction strategies should be strengthened to target marginalized and vulnerable groups. The importance of industrial development and energy in achieving the goals was also emphasized. The contribution of statistical capacity and information and communications technology to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, which was relevant to all the conferences, was recognized. In the context of the midterm review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010, the General Assembly emphasized that least developed countries were lagging behind in the implementation of the United Nations development agenda and that efforts need to be stepped up.

8. In the social area, the importance of the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child was underscored. The significance of health-related issues to women's empowerment and gender equality was also emphasized, including for the girl child. With regard to HIV/AIDS, the need for a coordinated approach between plans and strategies for addressing HIV/AIDS, sexual and reproductive health and national development, including poverty eradication strategies, was noted. It was also highlighted that the changing age structures of

populations, in both developing and developed countries, will fundamentally reshape the context within which the United Nations development agenda will need to be achieved. Changing age structures provide the opportunity to reap a "demographic dividend" if enough jobs can be created for the expanding workforce. At the same time, it was noted that the growing number of people reaching old age with minimal literacy and numeracy poses the threat of an increase in old-age poverty. To address that threat, the mainstreaming of the issue of ageing into national and international agendas, as well as capacity-building at the national level, was called for. The concerns of other vulnerable groups, such as indigenous peoples, youth and people with disabilities, the world drug problem and the use of crime prevention and criminal justice to respond to urban crime and to combat sexual exploitation of children were also addressed.

9. In the area of environment, relevant functional commissions addressed the impacts of climate change and air pollution on the overall achievement of the United Nations development agenda. There was a widely shared recognition that climate change, in addition to being an environmental concern, was a global sustainable development challenge with strong social and economic dimensions and that the international community should take urgent action. The important role of sustainable forest management, in particular for vulnerable groups, in achieving the internationally agreed development goals was noted. The importance attached to sustainable forest management was also manifested by the adoption of a non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests at the seventh session of the United Nations Forum on Forests.

10. In addition to advancing the implementation of their respective conference outcomes, functional commissions also contributed directly to the annual ministerial review, a new central mechanism to promote the integrated and coordinated follow-up of conferences, mandated by Heads of State and Government at the 2005 World Summit. In 2007, the Economic and Social Council will hold its first annual ministerial review, on the theme "Strengthening efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger, including through the global partnership for development". The Commission on the Status of Women submitted a paper on that theme to the Council highlighting recommendations for action to eliminate poverty and hunger based on previously agreed documents of the Commission. The Committee for Development Policy focused on the international partnership for effective poverty reduction and recommended that the Council, through the annual ministerial review, monitor poverty reduction strategy papers and national development strategies to identify the most effective modality of international partnership for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Other commissions that were not able to specifically address the theme, given the lateness of the decision by the Council, made contributions in the context of their own focus and their natural link to poverty eradication. Their contributions, covering a whole array of development challenges, highlight the strong linkages between the conference goals and the need for all-encompassing development strategies to address the multiple dimensions of poverty.

11. The foregoing account, while selective, shows that the global conference follow-up mechanisms have framed their work around the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. It also illustrates that many of them have adopted a comprehensive approach to addressing the follow-up of their individual conferences, recognizing that the different goals and targets agreed at the major United Nations conferences and summits can be achieved

only if they are pursued together. The remaining challenge is to bring the results of the various conference follow-up processes together in a systematic way.

Implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society

12. Implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society are being undertaken in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/252. The traditional task of harmonizing the work of diverse United Nations entities in the implementation of a summit outcome presents unique challenges in the case of the World Summit on the Information Society, since implementation and follow-up require a broad engagement of non-governmental stakeholders and partners.

13. While defining parameters of the follow-up in response to those challenges, the Council, in its resolution 2006/46, decided that it would monitor the system-wide follow-up to the Summit outcomes in the context of its annual consideration of the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits in its coordination segment, on the basis of the work of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and drawing upon other relevant inputs.

14. There are three interacting streams of implementation and follow-up activities: the intergovernmental, United Nations system and multi-stakeholder streams. The intergovernmental process (Economic and Social Council and Commission on Science and Technology for Development) performs follow-up review and assessment, with contributions from non-governmental stakeholders channelled through the multi-stakeholder Global Alliance for Information and Communication Technologies and Development (see annex). During its 2007 annual session, which focused on the theme "Promoting the building of a people-centred, development-oriented and inclusive information society: progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society", the Commission assessed global and regional progress in the implementation of the World Summit on the Information Society. United Nations entities, including the regional commissions, in accordance with their respective mandates, engage in implementation, in cooperation with diverse non-governmental stakeholders. Coordination among the United Nations system entities is undertaken by the United Nations Group on the Information Society, created by the Secretary-General in accordance with the request of the Summit. Also, in accordance with the recommendations contained in the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, cooperation, exchange of information and promotion of partnership among diverse stakeholders are undertaken through a system of action-line facilitators. In May 2007, in the framework of the World Summit on the Information Society Week, organized in connection with World Information Society Day, a series of meetings of action-line facilitators was held in Geneva. Furthermore, the World Summit on the Information Society requested the Secretary-General to convene the Internet Governance Forum, a new forum for multi-stakeholder policy dialogue, to discuss, inter alia, public policy issues related to Internet governance in order to foster the sustainability, robustness, security, stability and development of the Internet. The inaugural meeting, entitled "Internet governance for development", was held in Athens from 30 October to 2 November 2006, and the second meeting is scheduled to be held in Rio de Janeiro from 12 to 15 November 2007. Consultations are under

way to start a process towards enhanced cooperation among all relevant stakeholders with regard to Internet governance, as requested by the Summit.

Update of progress made in the implementation of key provisions of relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council

15. The progress in advancing an integrated approach in the substantive work of the United Nations has been complemented by several procedural improvements in the follow-up of conferences, called for in resolutions 50/227, 52/12 B, 57/270 B and 60/265. With regard to methods of work, the General Assembly (resolution 57/270 B), and subsequently the Economic and Social Council (resolution 2006/44), requested functional commissions to examine their methods of work. By June 2007, all functional commissions had reported the completion of the review of their methods of work. All of them had put in place a mechanism to ensure the continuity of the Bureau, had significantly improved cooperation with the Council and had organized panels and side events during their sessions with multi-stakeholder participation.

16. Over the last year, some progress has also been made in further strengthening the ties among functional commissions. A new element of interaction was the meeting of the chairpersons of the functional commissions with the Bureau of the Council. That meeting, held on 15 January 2007 in New York, replaced the individual joint bureau meetings. All chairpersons of the functional commissions, as well as of the United Nations Forum on Forest and the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, participated in the meeting, some via video link. In addition, there were interactions between individual functional commissions. For example, the Statistical Commission held a joint panel discussion with the Commission on the Status of Women on the latter's theme "The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child". The panel discussion was very well received. Functional commissions also continued to cooperate with relevant United Nations funds and programmes, specialized agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions, allowing them to tap into the lessons learned and examples of good practices from the field.

B. Regional perspectives

Supporting national development strategies

17. Achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, remains a key challenge in all regions of the world. In an interdependent world, the importance of regional approaches in achieving the United Nations development agenda is increasingly recognized. This has resulted in the emergence of new regional organizations with a variety of approaches to the pursuit of the development agenda. Against this backdrop, in its resolution 2006/44 the Economic and Social Council invited the regional commissions to cooperate with regional organizations and other regional processes, as appropriate, in pursuing the implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences. Regional commissions have responded to that call by assisting their respective regions in the pursuit of their goals and objectives through a common approach. They have increasingly focused on helping regions identify priority areas for action and have realigned their programmes accordingly.

18. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), after undergoing a repositioning exercise over recent months, has further realigned its work programme around the themes of the major global conferences and the priorities of the New Partnership for Africa's Development. To better help Member States translate normative outcomes and agreements into operational guidance, it also reformed and strengthened its technical cooperation programme. ECA also strengthened its cooperation with other regional organizations. A strategic compact with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was also made to scale up capacity development in support of meeting the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. To strengthen collaboration at the subregional level, ECA is empowering its subregional offices to play an enhanced role in the delivery of the Commission's work programme. In addition, ECA has made efforts to revitalize the annual regional consultation mechanism, chaired by the Executive Secretary, which is meant to strengthen United Nations-system coordination.

19. While the overall performance of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) region has been impressive, the region also includes some subregions where least developed countries and countries with economies in transition struggle to make headway. To better assist those countries, ESCAP, in collaboration with UNDP and the Asian Development Bank, has organized subregional Millennium Development Goals forums in the Asia and the Pacific region to develop subregional plans of action to support the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. ESCAP also undertook analytical studies[1] to identify regional policy actions needed. Other activities in follow-up of specific conferences include a series of regional policy forums.

20. The work of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) was guided by the Millennium Declaration and the Arab Declaration on the pursuit of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, adopted by the League of Arab States on 30 June 2005, as well as the major United Nations conferences and summits. With regard to the Millennium Development Goals, ESCWA, in close collaboration with regional offices of United Nations specialized agencies and the League of Arab States, is preparing the 2007 United Nations Millennium Development Goal report that covers all 22 Arab countries. Activities in follow-up to specific conferences included assisting the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment; promoting sustainable water and energy management in collaboration with the other agencies; integrating HIV/AIDS in planning and programming for social equity in the Arab region, in collaboration with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, UNDP, the World Health Organization Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); promoting national machineries for women and full implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; and assisting in implementing the World Summit on the Information Society outcomes.

21. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) also assisted Member States in the follow-up of the global conferences. With regard to the Millennium Development Goals, ECLAC coordinated the preparation of the

[1] See, e.g., the ESCAP publication *Achieving the MDGs in Asia: A Case for More Aid?* and the Asian Development Bank publication *The Millennium Development Goals: Progress in Asia and the Pacific, 2006*.

annual regional inter-agency report on the Millennium Development Goals, which serves as a catalyst for the analytical and normative work undertaken in support of the operational activities of the United Nations system at the regional level. It also convenes the regional inter-agency coordination meeting. Activities to follow up specific conferences include a project on hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity undertaken in cooperation with the World Food Programme; the establishment of a regional coordinating mechanism to address the sustainable development of small island developing States with the engagement of 11 regional organizations; serving as a technical secretariat of the Regional Plan of Action for the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean; holding the tenth ECLAC regional conference on women in follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action; and establishing an Internet portal that provides access to a database of gender statistics.

22. The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) has also focused on the follow-up of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields. It has, inter alia, provided a regional platform for exchanging good practices in the context of the follow-up to the Beijing process. Recognizing that the creation of an enabling environment cannot be separated from political stability, the 2007 annual session discussed the threats posed by frozen conflicts (in the Balkans, the Caucasus and, to a lesser degree, Central Asia) on economic developments and how this could be addressed. The session also discussed how ECE can further its collaboration with the Council of Europe, the European Union, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia and the international financial institutions to successfully address these challenges and to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

C. Strengthening the link between the global policy debate and national activities

Making headway in the integrated and coordinated implementation of the United Nations development agenda at the country level

23. To have real impact on peoples' livelihoods, progress made in the United Nations system's conceptual and standard-setting work aimed at advancing the integrated and coordinated follow-up must be translated into progress at the country level. This requires efforts both by Member States and by the United Nations system itself. The challenge for developing countries is to firmly anchor, with the support of the international community, the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, in their national development strategies.[2] The challenge before United Nations system organizations is to work together in a more integrated manner to ensure that the different agencies, including non-resident agencies, can bring their comparative advantages to bear in the context of the work as a United Nations country team.

24. The 2005 World Summit marked an important step forward in promoting the integrated and coordinated follow-up of conferences at the country level. By calling upon countries to develop and begin to implement comprehensive national

[2] See General Assembly resolutions 60/1 and 60/265.

development strategies to achieve their national development priorities as well as the internationally agreed development goals, Member States committed themselves at the highest level to use the Millennium Development Goals and the goals and strategies agreed at the major United Nations conferences and summits as the foundation of their national development strategies. An increasing number of United Nations country teams have been able to work with national partners to link Millennium Development Goals, poverty reduction strategy papers, common country assessments and United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs). A 2007 United Nations Development Group (UNDG) study on the effectiveness of United Nations Country Teams in advancing the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goal agenda in national development plans and poverty reduction strategy paper processes, to be published in July 2007, is reviewing the effectiveness of eight country teams in assisting countries in mainstreaming the Millennium Development Goals and internationally agreed development goals into their national development strategies.

25. Reports of individual United Nations specialized agencies and funds and programmes also point to progress in helping countries to firmly anchor specific Millennium Development Goals in national development strategies. For example, UNDP, in coordination with other agencies, worked with over 40 countries in Africa and Asia to support Governments making Millennium Development Goal needs assessments and using that analysis to prepare Millennium Development Goal-based strategies. UNFPA reported increased attention to reproductive health issues in national development frameworks during the period 2004-2006. In the area of gender-responsive budgeting, the United Nations Development Fund for Women supported new or strengthened networks to advocate for and monitor progress on gender-responsive budgeting and Millennium Development Goals, poverty reduction strategy papers and national development strategies in 15 countries.

26. In accordance with UNDG guidance, common country assessments and UNDAFs, in support of national development strategies, are becoming more strategically focused in helping countries progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and in promoting comprehensive approaches to poverty eradication that go beyond the income dimension. However, with their strong focus on the Millennium Development Goals, UNDAFs often remain predominantly focused on social development issues. Recent revisions of the common country assessment and UNDAF guidelines try to address this issue by underlining the importance of including the broader international development agenda of the internationally agreed development goals as a basis for analysis and planning at the country level. Further efforts will need to be made to more systematically tap into the extensive knowledge and expertise of non-resident agencies, in particular on issues related to sustained economic growth and productive sectors included in the broader United Nations development agenda, such as decent work, employment, rural and agricultural development, industrial development and the interface between trade and development, and/or international treaty obligations.

27. A main challenge for the United Nations system in better promoting an integrated and coordinated follow-up to conferences is to find a way of better harnessing the different capacities and comparative advantages of each organization. To that end, over recent years the organizations of the United Nations system have adopted several concrete measures. The introduction of common country assessments and UNDAFs is one example of such efforts. The 164 common country

assessments and 146 UNDAFs prepared by early 2007,[3] have proved to be useful common frameworks for promoting country-level cooperation, such as the use of joint programmes and joint programming. For example, by 2007, more than 350 joint programmes were registered on the UNDG website.[3] While the UNDAFs have enabled the United Nations country teams to act in a more integrated and concerted manner and have helped in formulating comprehensive approaches, United Nations agencies continue to have agency-specific country programme documents and country programme action plans as their respective operational programming documents. The most recent initiatives adopted by the United Nations system to act in a more cohesive manner are the "One United Nations" pilot programmes[4] launched at the end of 2006, following the recommendation of the High-Level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence. Eight pilot countries started to test the "One United Nations" approach on a voluntary basis.

28. Another major challenge in promoting an integrated and coordinated follow-up of conferences at the national level is to ensure the full involvement and participation of non-residential agencies in the common country programming process to ensure that countries have access to the expertise available within the whole United Nations system. In particular, specialized agencies and other United Nations-system organizations dealing with cross-border issues, such as the regional commissions, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), as well as agencies dealing with highly technical issues, have found it difficult to bring their sector expertise fully to bear in country programming processes. Further efforts on all sides will be needed to better coordinate individual work programmes with the UNDAF, in particular those of the specialized agencies. As a first step to facilitate the inclusion of non-resident agencies, UNDG adopted an implementation plan and UNDP agreed to finance, on a one-year pilot basis, dedicated capacity for outreach to a number of non-resident agencies.

D. Role of United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Development Group in advancing the integrated and coordinated follow-up of conferences

29. The United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs and UNDG are the three key collaborative mechanisms of the United Nations system's development work, and they have all made efforts to strengthen their focus on the implementation of the outcomes of the conferences and summits.

30. Over the past year, CEB has taken concrete steps to implement the recommendations of its 2005 report "One United Nations — catalyst for progress and change: how the Millennium Declaration is changing the way the United

[3] See A/62/73-E/2007/52.

[4] The term "Delivering as one" is now alternated with "One United Nations", following agreement in April 2007 at the meeting of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination that the former better expressed the intention of the initiative, that of more intense partnership.

Nations system works", with the aim of promoting coherence and synergies in the pursuit of the United Nations development agenda. In 2007, one example of a concrete contribution to enhancing policy coherence around a shared and common objective is the development of a "toolkit" for mainstreaming employment and decent work objectives in the policies and activities of the United Nations organizations. The toolkit helps the United Nations system organizations to determine how their strategies, policies, and programmes are interlinked with employment and decent work outcomes and how they may optimize employment outcomes at all levels. CEB also supported the United Nations system's efforts to better work together at the country level in the context of the "One United Nations" pilots.

31. The Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs has served as a platform for strategic analysis and promoting coherent approaches on economic and social issues. While oriented towards a broad range of policy issues, the activities of the Executive Committee are particularly essential for achieving the United Nations development goals. Members of the Executive Committee, which include primarily United Nations Secretariat entities, work closely together in supporting meetings of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions, notably on conference follow-up. In follow-up to the 2005 World Summit, the Executive Committee adopted as one of its key priorities support for the Development Cooperation Forum and annual ministerial reviews of the Economic and Social Council. All members have started to gear their work in support of those functions of the Council.

32. UNDG has played a major role in advancing the implementation of the conference outcomes at the country level. In addition to measures outlined in section II.C above, UNDG facilitated an exchange of lessons learned among United Nations country teams. To ensure that good practices become global practices, UNDG promoted the development of several web-based tools. Examples include the UNDG Coordination Practice Network, which serves as a global electronic network for United Nations staff on coordination issues. Another example is the establishment of a UNDG inter-agency policy adviser network, which, once fully operational in 2007, will be able to provide virtual substantive policy and operational advice to country teams on Millennium Development Goal-based strategies.

E. Engaging the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization in the implementation of the United Nations development agenda

33. With the major United Nations conferences and summits, an unprecedented consensus based on the internationally agreed development goals has emerged. The United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions and all parts of the international system have come together behind the same set of development commitments and stand ready to be held accountable for them. This unique opportunity must now be seized to join forces and put this shared set of development commitments into practice.

34. This requires strengthened cooperation among the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization. The Economic and Social

Council meets with the intergovernmental bodies of the Bretton Woods institutions in the context of its annual special high-level meeting with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and UNCTAD and holds a high-level dialogue with the financial and trade organizations in the context of the high-level segment of the Council. In addition, the General Assembly assesses progress towards the implementation of the International Conference on Financing for Development during a biennial high-level dialogue of the General Assembly. While these meetings have continued to attract high-level participation, which attests to the importance attached to them, there has been a sentiment among institutional stakeholders that the meetings have largely remained an exercise in exchange of information on activities related to the follow-up of the Monterrey Conference, rather than a dialogue resulting in the development of a common agenda for joint action outlining concrete steps on how to move ahead together in the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus. Efforts to make the meeting more interactive and focused will need to continue.

35. Complementing those existing forums, the 2005 World Summit opened up several new possibilities for enhanced cooperation. At the global level, the Development Cooperation Forum and the annual ministerial review provide important new opportunities to strengthen cooperation among the four institutions. At the country level, where the Bretton Woods institutions have played an important role in assisting countries in the preparation of poverty reduction strategy papers, the World Summit's focus on the adoption of country-owned national development strategies to achieve the Millennium Development Goals provides scope for increased cooperation. To help countries prepare and implement Millennium Development Goal-based national development strategies, a strong operational partnership between UNDP and the World Bank, aimed at helping to identify and solve some of the critical practical bottlenecks in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and promote the scaling up of good practices, is currently under discussion. To demonstrate the strong commitment to work more closely together and to eliminate duplication, cooperation at the highest level between the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization should also be further strengthened. One possibility would be to hold regular meetings that could serve several functions. First, as an immediate task they could help identify common strategic priorities and a shared vision for the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, to be held in Doha in the second half of 2008,[5] and how to best use upcoming events as stepping stones for that review. Second, they can provide an opportunity to formulate a common vision on the future work of those organizations in implementing the United Nations development agenda.

III. Making the conference follow-up process more efficient and accountable

36. While some progress has been made at the global, regional and country levels in realigning individual conference follow-up processes with the United Nations development agenda, much more needs to be done to reap the benefits of potential

[5] See General Assembly resolution 61/191.

synergies between the different follow-up processes. The present section sets out proposals on how the new Economic and Social Council functions, notably the annual ministerial review and the Development cooperation Forum, and the specific meeting of the General Assembly on development, mandated in its resolution 60/265, could help the United Nations system to better capitalize on the synergies of the different follow-up processes.

A. Enhancing the efficiency of the conference follow-up process

37. The Economic and Social Council, as a central mechanism for system-wide coordination in the economic and social and related fields, can help generate synergies by providing an umbrella for the different follow-up processes.[6] The two new functions of the Council, the annual ministerial review and the Development Cooperation Forum, provide important opportunities in this regard. In particular, an annual ministerial review under the auspices of the Council can serve as the new central mechanism for monitoring progress in the implementation of the agenda, an umbrella review that provides a comprehensive and integrated approach to the different follow-up processes. While the Council will need to take a number of steps to realize this potential of the annual ministerial review, one important and urgent step is to ensure that the Council identifies its themes and priorities in a clear and timely manner.

38. A key element is the adoption of a multi-year programme of work for the annual ministerial review, based on a cross-sectoral approach, focusing on thematic issues common to the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields, as mandated in General Assembly resolution 61/16. To provide sufficient predictability, the initial multi-year programme of work would ideally cover at least three years. In 2007, the vital importance of adopting a multi-year programme of work has become most apparent in the case of the Committee for Development Policy, whose efforts to realign its work programme with the themes of the Economic and Social Council high-level segment have suffered from the lateness of the Council's decision on the themes. This example illustrates that the predictability of the work of the Council is one of the essential elements for ensuring the United Nations system's support for its work.

39. Once a multi-year programme of work is in place, each functional commission would be requested to contribute to the annual ministerial review. In the short run, the Council could ask functional commissions working on conference follow-up processes to devote part of their sessions to an analysis of the obstacles and challenges, as well as lessons learned and innovative practices, in relation to the theme of the annual ministerial review. In the medium term, as the functional commissions are adopting or reviewing existing work programmes, the Council could request functional commissions to include the annual ministerial review theme as one of the themes for their annual sessions.

40. Over time, as the new work programmes of the functional commissions are coming into effect, functional commissions would start to address the cross-sectoral annual ministerial review theme from their own perspective, alongside their own conference-specific topics. For instance, if the Economic and Social Council were to

[6] See General Assembly resolution 60/265, para. 49.

choose the cross-sectoral theme of science and technology for development, the Commission on the Status of Women would examine the role of science and technology in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, while the Commission on Sustainable Development would address the importance of science and technology in implementing Agenda 21, the further implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. This would allow each of the functional commissions to bring its specific perspective to bear on the annual ministerial review theme, which in turn would enable the Council to formulate comprehensive cross-sectoral policy recommendations that take into account the interrelatedness of the different United Nations conferences and their respective goals. By tackling a different cross-sectoral theme each year, the annual ministerial review would, over time, provide a truly holistic and integrated follow-up of all aspects covered by the United Nations development agenda.

41. The focus on a common cross-sectoral annual ministerial review theme in addition to the functional commissions' specific focus would also give new impetus to efforts to strengthen cooperation between the functional commissions. At present, each functional commission has its own constituency — governmental and non-governmental — which rarely engages in an exchange of ideas with constituencies of other functional commissions. To actively promote cooperation among the functional commissions and their various constituencies, the Council could decide to devote part of the meetings of the Bureau of the Council with the chairs of the functional commissions at the beginning of each year to the identification of concrete measures to foster cooperation, in particular on the common annual ministerial review theme. Such measures could include enhanced use of joint panel events and joint informal working groups.

42. A common thematic focus should also help in enhancing cooperation between the functional commissions and the regional commissions to more systematically integrate lessons learned at the regional level.[7] As illustrated in section II.B above, regional commissions have arranged their work around the Millennium Development Goals and internationally agreed development goals, and much of their work is directly linked to the individual follow-up of major United Nations conferences and summits. Hence, there is much potential for cooperation. At the moment, the level of cooperation between the functional commissions and the regional commissions varies significantly. In particular, the Commission on Sustainable Development, with its biennial regional implementation forums, has established strong links with the regional commissions. However, rolling out the scheme of the Commission on Sustainable Development to the other functional commissions would overburden the limited capacity of regional commissions. As an alternative, annual ministerial review regional implementation meetings could be held. Whenever possible, such meetings could be held back to back with the sessions of the regional commissions. The meetings would review the progress in the implementation of the United Nations development agenda at the regional level and address the annual ministerial review theme. By reviewing regional-level progress in the follow-up to various United Nations conferences, the regional implementation meetings would help to strengthen cooperation between the functional commissions and regional commissions, as called for in Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/44. At the same time such meetings would contribute

[7] See Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/44.

to the annual ministerial review, as called for in General Assembly resolution 61/16 and Economic and Social Council decision 2006/274.

43. The Development Cooperation Forum, to be convened by the Council, provides another new opportunity to create synergies between the follow-up processes. Anchored in the global partnership for development set out in the Monterrey Consensus, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the Millennium Declaration and reaffirmed at the 2005 World Summit, it is expected to bring together all the relevant actors to engage in a dialogue on key policy issues affecting the quality and impact of development cooperation. One of the Forum's goals is to make recommendations on measures and policy options to enhance coherence and effectiveness and to promote development cooperation for the realization of the internationally agreed development goals. The Forum is thus the opportunity to review the extent to which development cooperation in general is supportive of the internationally agreed development goals. While the Forum has a distinct identity, its outcome will also contribute to the Follow-Up International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in Doha in 2008. Since the Forum is aimed at broad-based participation, preparations should be held at the regional and global levels to facilitate the participation of a diverse group of stakeholders. To bring a regional focus to the Forum's work, preparatory meetings could be convened by the regional commissions back to back with their respective sessions.

44. In addition to the annual ministerial review and the Development Cooperation Forum, the General Assembly, in paragraph 56 of its resolution 60/265, decided to hold a specific meeting focused on development. The meeting should be seen in relation to efforts of Member States to strengthen the role of the Assembly as the highest intergovernmental mechanism for the formulation and appraisal of policy matters on development. In 2006, the specific meeting focused on development was held on 6 December 2006, in New York. In the future, the meeting could serve as the pinnacle of the United Nations system's efforts in advancing the implementation of the United Nations development agenda. The meeting should build on the outcome of the annual ministerial review, which will provide a comprehensive overview of the implementation process. The meeting should be seen as an occasion for Member States, the United Nations system and other major stakeholders — both governmental and non-governmental — to announce concrete steps and new initiatives to address the constraints and challenges identified during the annual ministerial review.

B. Enhancing the accountability of the conference follow-up process

45. Making the conference follow-up process more accountable will require a rigorous follow-up of decisions taken by the Economic and Social Council. At the moment, the coordination segment reviews the measures taken by the United Nations system to implement the ministerial declaration by taking up the high-level theme of the previous year, as envisaged in paragraph 43 of General Assembly resolution 57/270 B. In the future, such a link should be maintained between the high-level segment, in particular its annual ministerial review, and the coordination segment. Through such an approach the annual ministerial review multi-year programme of work would help in determining the multi-year programme of work of the coordination segment. Ensuring accountability will require a coordination

segment that provides a comprehensive overview of the United Nations system's efforts in advancing the implementation of the recommendations of the high-level segment related to the follow-up of the United Nations conferences, and in particular of the annual ministerial review at the global, regional and country levels, based on recent and reliable data. Since several innovations have been successfully introduced in the recent past to ensure a comprehensive overview of the United Nations system work to follow-up Economic and Social Council decisions adopted at the coordination segment, the key features of that segment should be maintained. Efforts should instead focus on facilitating a candid discussion by using innovative meeting formats and the inclusion of recent and reliable data in coordination-segment reports.

Possible features of future coordination segment

Panel on United Nations system follow-up to the ministerial declaration, in particular the annual ministerial review, with relevant executive heads of United Nations funds and specialized agencies and regional commissions to:

- Report on CEB initiatives, such as the development of a system-wide toolkit, to implement the annual ministerial review ministerial declaration
- Present the contributions of relevant technical agencies whose work is vital to development activities, but has not always received the necessary political attention at the intergovernmental level
- Report on action taken by the regional commissions by themselves or in cooperation with other regional actors to implement the ministerial declaration

Panel discussion involving the Council and the chairs of functional commissions and other relevant subsidiary bodies to:

- Report on action taken to follow up the ministerial declaration of the previous year
- Discuss actions planned to implement the newly adopted Ministerial declaration
- Discuss other issues that need the Council's urgent attention

Roundtable-discussion with countries that volunteered for the annual ministerial review in the previous year to:

- Present actions taken by UNDG at country level to address the challenges and obstacles identified during the annual ministerial review
- Present actions taken by developing and developed countries

Review of the reporting mechanism

46. Delegations have found it difficult to cope with the volume of reports submitted to the Economic and Social Council. The large number of documents that need to be considered has had a negative impact on the Council's ability to provide its subsidiary bodies with clear policy guidance, as called for in General Assembly resolutions 60/265 and 61/16. There is thus an urgent need for a thorough review of the reporting mechanism, particularly reporting by the Council's subsidiary bodies. To that end, the Council should explore how to make the information presented in the reports to the Council more easily accessible.

47. The functional commissions and other relevant subsidiary bodies of the Council mandated with the follow-up of specific conferences or summits in the economic, social and related field should prepare short inputs, of no more than three pages, which should provide an overview of actions taken and key findings, including examples of good practice as well as a set of policy recommendations on the annual ministerial review theme from their perspective. This could follow the current practice of the Commission on the Status of Women, which has been submitting to the Council a paper on the theme of its high-level segment. The input could be included as a separate section in their reports to the Council on their work. The Council should invite other follow-up mechanisms to provide a similar input to the annual ministerial review discussions.

48. Similarly, regional commissions should provide a short strategic summary of their key findings and recommendations of the annual ministerial review regional meetings. The input of the regional commissions could follow the format of the input provided by regional commissions to the fifteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.[8] The joint regional commission input to the 2007 session could serve as a model both in terms of the preparation of the input and in terms of the presentation. The contribution could be submitted as part of the annual report of the Secretary-General on regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields" submitted to the Council.

49. To ensure that the work of the subsidiary and expert bodies of the Economic and Social Council has real impact, whenever possible the contributions should be submitted to the Council well in advance of the start of the negotiations on its ministerial declaration and its substantive session.

50. Efforts are also needed to make the annual report of the Economic and Social Council to the General Assembly more substantive. As a first step, if the specific event of the General Assembly on development is to serve as the pinnacle of the United Nations system's efforts in advancing the implementation of the United Nations development agenda, the Council could use a section of its annual report to the Assembly to highlight key messages that have emerged from the annual ministerial review and the work of the Council's subsidiary bodies on the review.

Strengthening the evaluation and monitoring capacity of the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies

51. Enhancing the accountability of the review process will require an examination of the existing conference follow-up monitoring system. This was also

[8] See http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/csd15/documents/regional_commissions.pdf.

recognized in resolution 60/265, in which the General Assembly called for a strengthening of monitoring of the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. Steps will need to be taken at all levels. At the global level, in line with paragraph 54 of resolution 60/265, the Statistical Commission should strive to finalize indicators to assess the implementation of commitments. There is also an urgent need to raise capacity in data collection and monitoring of implementation at the national level. Each functional commission could address the issues of data collection, analysis and dissemination of information specific to the work of individual functional commissions. As a first step, to address challenges and obstacles in collecting quality data, the Economic and Social Council could invite functional commissions, in cooperation with the Statistical Commission, to organize a series of round-table discussions on strengthening statistical capacity for data relevant to their follow-up activities. The results of those round-table discussions, as appropriate, could be submitted to the Statistical Commission for its consideration. At the regional level, regional commissions play a key role in facilitating data reporting from the national to the international system, in analysing and disseminating available data and in national statistical capacity-building. Functional commissions should tap into this knowledge when taking up the issue. At the country level, United Nations country teams, with the support of the regional commissions, have continued to promote the inclusion of measurable results, which are in line with regional and global requirements for Millennium Development Goal monitoring, in the national development strategies. The Council should encourage the country teams to continue their efforts to collaborate closely with other United Nations institutions, in particular regional commissions and other non-resident institutions with expertise on specific Millennium Development Goal and internationally agreed development goal indicators, and to ensure that national statistical systems are fully involved in the process of data preparation and analysis of the indicators.

Enhancing the effectiveness of the conference follow-up process by strengthening the involvement of civil society and the private sector

52. The world conferences have resulted in an unprecedented rise in the involvement of civil society and business representatives in the work of the United Nations. Advocacy and interest groups, business and industry, research and academic institutions and other relevant stakeholders have played an important role in advancing the implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits. Yet, as has been the case in the intergovernmental processes, there has been a lack of cross-fertilization among the different constituencies.

53. By bringing the different follow-up processes together, the annual ministerial review, the Development Cooperation Forum and the specific event of the General Assembly on development provide important new opportunities to inject new dynamism into the follow-up of the conferences, by promoting greater interaction among the different constituencies. The Innovation Fair, held in parallel to the annual ministerial review, provides the opportunity for civil society and the private sector to showcase innovative practices. It should evolve into a "matchmaking" event where people get together to engage in new partnerships to advance the implementation of the United Nations development agenda. The Development Cooperation Forum multi-stakeholder dialogue will also provide an opportunity for

civil society and the private sector to engage in a discussion with both donors and recipients of development assistance about the future of development cooperation.

54. Interest of the private sector in the work of the United Nations has also continued to rise. The 2007 Global Compact Leaders Summit[9], which is to be held in Geneva in July and is expected to attract an unprecedented number of chief executive officers of companies, attests to this fact. The United Nations has responded to the increased interest of civil society and the private sector through innovative forms of engagement. One such new mechanism is the Global Alliance for Information and Communication Technologies and Development, approved by the Secretary-General on 28 March 2006, which promotes the mainstreaming of information and communication technologies for development in the United Nations development agenda, including by enhancing multi-stakeholder involvement in the World Summit on the Information Society follow-up through the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and the Economic and Social Council. A synopsis of the activities of the Global Alliance is contained in the annex to the present report.

[9] See http://www.globalcompactsummit.org/.

Annex

Global Alliance for Information and Communication Technologies and Development

1. The Global Alliance for Information and Communication Technologies and Development[a] was created by the Secretary-General on 28 March 2006 and launched in Kuala Lumpur in June 2006.

2. The Global Alliance provides an inclusive, multi-stakeholder global forum and platform for cross-sectoral policy dialogue and advocacy, and catalyses multi-stakeholder, action-oriented partnerships under it umbrella. Largely a network of networks, that Alliance does not have any operational or implementing role.

3. In its first year, the Global Alliance has acquired strong brand recognition as an innovative and open United Nations initiative, bringing together all key stakeholders around a single networking platform in support of the internationally agreed development goals.

4. The Global Alliance is positioned to be a key contributor to the achievement of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society, and is well placed to further the United Nations development agenda and to make a meaningful contribution to harnessing the technology-driven World Summit on the Information Society process, which supports the broader United Nations development goals.

5. The initial focus of the Global Alliance is on the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in promoting: (a) education, (b) health, (c) entrepreneurship and (d) governance. Significant attention is being paid to the topics of connectivity and access, with special consideration given to Africa. The 2007 business plan of the Global Alliance provides strategic direction and a framework for its work.

6. The Global Alliance is chaired by Craig Barrett, Chairman of the Board of Intel Corporation, and guided by two multi-stakeholder bodies, the Steering Committee and the Strategy Council. The Panel of High-level Advisers and the Network of Champions provide a larger pool of policy and expert advice to the Global Alliance. To support the achievement of its objectives, the Global Alliance has formed complementary initiatives and networks to foster policy debate and partnerships for action.

7. The Better Connectivity with Broadband to Africa initiative supports African efforts to accelerate the roll-out of communication infrastructure and increase broadband access across the continent by indicating a clear policy approach to the development of backbone networks to encourage interest and investment in broadband infrastructure and services. A major regional conference will be organized in October 2007 in Kigali by the International Telecommunication Union, the World Bank, the African Union, the African Development Bank, the African Telecommunication Union, the Economic Commission for Africa and the Global Alliance to bring together African leaders and policymakers along with members of the domestic and international private sector, financial institutions and other donors to agree on a concrete and comprehensive programme for accelerating the roll-out

[a] www.un.gaid.org.

of broadband, as well as other complementary actions for rural connectivity, capacity-building and local applications.

8. Telecentre.org aims to scale up the successes of the telecentre movement by helping telecentres become stronger, more sustainable and more numerous. In March 2007, the telecentre.org umbrella included networks in at least 10 countries serving thousands of centres. The initiative also provides a platform for over 36 partners focused on telecentre networking, training, content and services. The core social investment partners — Microsoft, the International Development Research Centre and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation — have contributed 21 million Canadian dollars to support these activities. Under the umbrella of the Global Alliance, telecentre.org plans to grow significantly over the next two years through a new affiliate partnership programme.

9. The Cyber Development Corps is being developed under the leadership of the Malaysian Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation to promote capacity-building through South-South cooperation. This initiative will establish a global outreach programme based on the spirit of volunteerism to help less developed nations and communities benefit from global ICT infrastructure and resources, and enhance their national development plans.

10. The Global Initiative for Inclusive Information and Communications Technology was launched under the leadership of the Wireless Internet Institute and World Times, Inc. to promote ICT solutions for over 600 million people with disabilities worldwide, encourage best-policy practices among Governments in the context of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and accelerate the development by industry and civil society of the scientific, industrial, standardization and economic conditions to make such solutions affordable worldwide. The initiative will create, among other things, a web-based media resource centre; a digital inclusion index establishing metrics, benchmarks and rankings for countries; and a global award for inclusive technology.

11. The Free Access for Schools to the Internet initiative advocates efforts to secure free or affordable Internet access for schools. It is envisioned that Governments will implement policies and actions promoted by this initiative through creative multi-stakeholder partnerships, using innovative financial solutions to minimize or avoid the cost burden for schools. Additional cumulative effects are anticipated, such as the decline of overall connectivity costs through increased competition.

12. Seventeen thematic Communities of Expertise are web-based networks bringing together motivated and capable actors to address specific, well-defined problems related to information and communication technologies and development in a results-oriented manner and to identify and disseminate good practice.

13. The six regional networks of the Global Alliance (for Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Arab States and countries in transition), once fully operational, will ensure the open, inclusive, participatory and truly global character of the Alliance and the adequate reflection of regional perspectives and needs in its activities.

14. Stakeholder networks will maximize participation to reflect the viewpoints of constituents with shared interests, extend the outreach of the Global Alliance and promote channels for smooth communications and collaboration. Six

networks — among civil society, youth, gender, persons with disabilities, parliamentarians and local government and regional authorities — are at various stages of development.

15. The Global Alliance is also working actively to provide multi-stakeholder inputs to the intergovernmental follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society, in both the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and the Economic and Social Council.